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Senate

The Senate met at 1 p.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. STEVENS).

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Today's prayer will be offered by our guest Chaplain, Rev. Charles V. Antonicelli, St. Joseph's Church on Capitol Hill, Washington, DC.

PRAYER

The guest Chaplain offered the following prayer:

Let us pray. Almighty God, source of all power and goodness, we give You thanks and praise this day for the many blessings You bestow on our country. Help us to be a beacon of hope and freedom to all nations.

Lord, look kindly on the Members of this august body. Give them wisdom and compassion, patience and endurance, so that they may meet the needs of Your people with justice and truth. Give them a sense of humble reverence for You and a sense of loving service to the people they have been elected to represent. Strengthen them with fortitude to make difficult decisions and courage to carry them through.

Dear God, bless these Senators in their deliberations this day. Keep them always from harm and watch over the people whom they serve. Help them to be a sign of Your care and protection to us always.

We ask this in Your holy name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable TED STEVENS led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will now be a

period for the transaction of morning business not to extend beyond the hour of 2 p.m., with the time equally divided between the two leaders or their designees.

RECOGNITION OF THE ACTING MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The acting majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, there will be a period for morning business until 2 p.m. At that time, the Senate will begin consideration of S. Con. Res. 23, the budget resolution. By statute, there will be 50 hours of debate. So Senators should expect late nights and numerous votes throughout this week.

As previously announced, there will be no votes today. However, it is the leader's intention to complete action on this matter of the budget this week.

There will be a cloture vote on Mr. Estrada's nomination tomorrow. Senators will be notified as to the precise time of that vote as soon as the majority leader and minority leader have consulted.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CORNYN). The Senator from Iowa.

CELEBRATE AMERICAN AGRICULTURE

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, we have an opportunity this week, as we do every year, to celebrate American agriculture. This is the week we traditionally recognize. It is called National Agriculture Week.

Ask any friend or neighbor what is eating them and you are likely to get an earful about rising gas prices, military action in Iraq, the high cost of health care, prescription drugs, or the downturn in the U.S. economy.

In my most recent town meetings, I listened to Iowans express anxiety about job security, retirement security, health care security, energy secu-

rity, national security, and homeland security. But never once did I have a single person in my State list as one of their concerns the concern of food security. That is because we in the United States are blessed with a rich agricultural bounty to provide more than enough food to feed U.S. consumers and a growing world population. American farmers are the most productive food producers in the world and, as a result, each American farmer can feed more than 120 people at home and abroad.

That is reason enough to give Americans an extra peace of mind. Yet I guess a majority of Americans take their food and how it got to their fork somewhat for granted. That is, in fact, a shame.

American agriculture serves an instrumental role in the life of every American. As George W. Bush has noted:

A nation that can feed its people is a nation more secure.

Beyond the benefits to national security, American agriculture also anchors the economy because the production of food and fiber from the farm to the consumer represents one-fifth of the U.S. economic pie. It props up our balance of trade. Agricultural exports exceed \$1 billion per week. It creates jobs. Twenty percent of America's workforce is employed in the food chain from production to processing, marketing, and retailing. It saves the American consumer money because each American consumer spends only 9 percent of their income on food, the lowest percentage in the world.

Every year in March those of us with interests in agriculture join forces to celebrate National Agriculture Week and spread the word about agriculture's affordable, high-quality abundance and its social, economic, and environmental influences on America.

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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